



# United States Department of the Interior

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

National Capital Region  
1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20242

IN REPLY REFER TO:

I.A.2. (NCR-CHOH)

April 19, 2013

Honorable Chris Van Hollen  
Member, U.S. House of Representatives  
51 Monroe Street, Suite 507  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Mr. Van Hollen:

Thank you for your letter of March 25, 2013, regarding deer management in the national parks, specifically in the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park (C&O Canal NHP). As you correctly noted a number of parks across the National Park Service (NPS) and within the National Capital Region are currently dealing with issues related to overabundant ungulates.

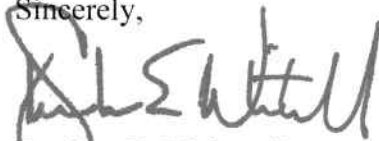
Pursuant to NPS Management Policies, in order to remove native wildlife from a park unit, NPS must first identify the need for such action and then must complete a management plan that undergoes National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review. While NEPA review for ungulate management plans has typically been accomplished through the completion of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), based on data gleaned from EISs completed for recent ungulate management plans, the NPS is considering using an Environmental Assessment (EA) for its NEPA review for certain park units rather than an EIS. An EA can be considerably less expensive than an EIS and can take considerably less time to complete. In accordance with Council on Environmental Quality regulations, NEPA review is accomplished through preparation of an EIS or EA depends on a proposed action's potential to significantly affect the quality of the human environment. The determination of which NEPA pathway to pursue is made on a case-by-case basis for each park unit.

At this time, the NPS has not yet allocated funding for a deer management plan and associated NEPA compliance for C&O Canal NHP, and has not yet determined the appropriate pathway for NEPA review. Once funded, we will conduct an internal scoping process to determine whether an EIS or EA should be prepared.

The ungulate management work group you referred to in your letter was established in order to provide recommendations to NPS managers to address service-wide ungulate management issues, and does not focus specifically on NEPA review for ungulate plans. However, several NPS Regions, including National Capital Region, have asked for assistance from the NPS Environmental Quality Division, our national environmental planning and NEPA compliance program, to determine how NEPA review can be completed in a timely and less expensive manner than has been the case for recent ungulate management plans.

The NPS will keep your offices updated regarding the progress of deer management planning at C&O Canal NHP. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or Superintendent Kevin Brandt, C&O Canal NHP at (301) 714-2202.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "S. E. Whitesell", written over the word "Sincerely,".

Stephen E. Whitesell  
Regional Director

cc:

Honorable Roger Berliner  
Councilmember, District 1  
Montgomery County Council



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL  
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

ROGER BERLINER  
COUNCILMEMBER  
DISTRICT 1

CHAIRMAN  
TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE  
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

March 25, 2013

Hon. Jon Jarvis  
Director  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

Dear Director Jarvis:

We are writing on behalf of our constituents with respect to the deer overpopulation in federal parks located in Montgomery County, Maryland. Deer are posing an increasing danger to motorists and nearby residents. In addition, the deer population is negatively affecting the environmental health of the parks.

Montgomery County has an active deer management program for its public parks but many deer are coming out of federal parks such as the Gold Mine Tract within the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historic Park. It is our understanding that NPS has set up an Ungulate Management Workshop specifically to address this issue.

According to the National Environmental Policy Act, any plan will require an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that can cost in excess of \$450,000. I have been advised by NPS staff that it is possible to complete a modified environmental assessment that can be significantly less expensive.

We ask that NPS expedite the processing of how parks can complete the less costly process as well as provide the C&O Canal NHP with all the necessary tools and resources to properly address this matter. Please advise me in writing of your findings and direct all correspondence to me at the following address:

51 Monroe Street, Suite 507  
Rockville, MD 20850  
FAX: (301) 424-5992

If you need additional information, please contact Alex Wong at (301) 424-3501 or by email at [alex.wong@mail.house.gov](mailto:alex.wong@mail.house.gov). Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

  
Chris Van Hollen  
Member of Congress

  
Roger Berliner  
Montgomery County Council

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